

Federal bureaucrats. It still sends government money to political campaigns—government money, taxpayers' money, to political campaigns, for goodness' sake. It still puts Washington in the middle of the States' redistricting decisions and on and on. The same rotten core is all still there.

The Senate knows how to make a law in a productive, bipartisan way. We have done it this year on multiple subjects. We have done it on election issues themselves in recent memory—the Help America Vote Act 20 years ago that Chris Dodd and I put together. We did that when there was an actual problem that needed solving and an actual bipartisan process. But as long as Senate Democrats remain fixated on their radical agenda, this body will continue to do the job the Framers assigned it and stop terrible ideas in their tracks.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Catherine Elizabeth Lhamon, of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know we are going to be voting soon, but I wanted to comment. I hope that Democrats and Republicans can rise above party to come together to protect our precious right to vote. I know, in Vermont, we do that. We make it very clear that voting is a right. Everybody can vote. We try to make it as clear and open as possible. People can be in jail for a crime; they still have a right to vote. We do not take it from anybody. You can vote right until the last minute. You can get absentee ballots. As a result, we have an overwhelming vote in Vermont—one of the highest percentages in the country.

Some suggest, well, you do it to favor one party or the other. I just point to the last election. The Governor and

Lieutenant Governor are elected separately in our State. We elected a Republican as Governor and a Democrat as Lieutenant Governor. It went back and forth like that all the way across the ballot.

It is just an example that we just want people to vote. And the timing right now couldn't be more urgent. In the wake of the Supreme Court's Shelby and Brnovich decisions, dozens of States are trying to restrict access to the ballot for tens of thousands of Americans, even millions of Americans—minority voters, the elderly, rural voters, student voters, the disabled, and others. These are the people we protect in my State.

The threats to the voting rights of any American are threats to all Americans. Indeed, they are threats to America, itself.

I am glad the Senate has taken much-needed action this week on the Freedom to Vote Act. It is a vital piece of legislation. It establishes common-sense rules of the road for voting procedures and ensures equal access to the ballot box for all Americans.

This bill is a compromise version of the original S. 1, and I note it reflects good faith efforts to broaden support for the legislation here in the Senate. I look forward to supporting this legislation on the floor. I can only hope it doesn't fall prey to the knee-jerk partisanship we have seen all too often lately in the Senate.

I am also proud to have recently introduced the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. That is a bill I have long championed and sponsored. This legislation would restore the core pillars of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that have been gutted by the Supreme Court's damaging and strange Shelby and Brnovich decisions.

But it also would provide critical protections to Native American communities across the country, including Alaska Native communities. This bill would fundamentally restore the Justice Department's powers to oversee and prevent harmful discriminatory changes to voting laws and procedures.

How can anybody stand up and say, "I am a proud American, but I am going to let some of these legislative bodies do things that will stop other Americans from voting"?

If you are a proud American and really mean it, then you want every single American—I don't care what their political party is, they should be able to vote.

I am working extremely hard to build bipartisan support for this bill, which—especially the past few Congresses—has been overwhelmingly bipartisan. I am optimistic we can arrive at a good bipartisan compromise that can serve as a starting point for continued bipartisan discussions here in the Senate.

You wouldn't know it if you listened to the partisan sound bites and Twitter wars in the modern media era, but this goal—protecting our right to vote—was never a partisan issue.

Our hero, a man I loved and was proud to serve with, John Lewis, once said:

We all know this is not a Democratic or Republican issue. It is an American one.

Well, truer words haven't been spoken. John Lewis was absolutely right. This is an American issue. If you believe in democracy, you believe in the right for everybody to vote. For those of us who run for elected office, I have always fought in Vermont to make sure everybody could vote, knowing that there were some sections of the State where there may be a majority voting against me. I have always insisted everybody be able to vote. That is democracy.

The core provisions of the act have been reauthorized five times—five times. Every single time it was with overwhelmingly bipartisan support in Congress. Republicans and Democrats alike voted for it. President Nixon, President Reagan, President George W. Bush proudly signed Voting Rights Act reauthorizations into law. Those Presidents—Presidents Nixon, Reagan, George W. Bush—spoke of the profound importance of the landmark law for our democracy.

In fact, just to show how it goes, the most recent Voting Rights Act reauthorization in 2006—you know what the vote was in the U.S. Senate: 98 to 0.

Some people feel we couldn't get a vote like that to say the sun rises in the East. But the fact is, every Republican, every Democrat said we need this to make sure Americans vote. It is not a case of saying Democrats vote or Republicans vote or Independents vote; it is Americans vote and we want all Americans to.

You know, the toxic partisanship of American politics today has sadly obscured what has united us across party lines for so long. The belief that protecting our right to vote—the very right that gives democracy its name—that is bigger than party or politics. It is the belief that a system of self-government—a government of, by, and for the people—is one that is worth preserving not only today, but for generations to come. It is the belief the government exists to serve the will of the people, not the other way around.

If I can just wear my hat as dean of the Senate—one who has been privileged to serve here all these years—I ask Senators, let's get back to doing things the way we have always done them: reaching across the aisle in good faith, meeting each other in the middle, legislate to protect the rights of the American people.

Even after all these years, I still have faith the Senate can serve as the conscience of the Nation. I believe it can shine a light on the path forward even on the most difficult, seemingly insurmountable issues. I believe we can do that again now on the fundamental issue of voting rights. So let's get to work. Our democracy—indeed our country as we know it—may very well depend upon it.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to complete my remarks prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week, President Biden's Chief of Staff retweeted a tweet from Harvard economist Jason Furman describing our current economic challenges—notably, the growing inflation crisis and supply chain issues—as “high class problems.”

“High class problems.”

Well, I guess working Americans struggling to stretch their paychecks to cover increases in the price of everything from groceries to gas can comfort themselves with the knowledge that they are experiencing “high class problems.”

The White House Chief of Staff's tone-deaf tweet was, unfortunately, pretty typical of a White House that seems eager to minimize or disclaim responsibility for most of the problems occurring on its watch, whether it is the flood of illegal immigration across our southern border or the high prices Americans are currently facing.

But as the White House Chief of Staff and the President should know, inflation has become a serious problem for working Americans. Inflation, of course, hits middle- and low-income families hard.

If you are wealthy, price increases may be an annoyance, but they are not likely to break the budget. If you are living paycheck to paycheck, on the other hand, price increases may mean the difference between making it to the next paycheck or running out of money mid-month.

Currently, inflation is costing a typical household \$175 a month, and that is according to Moody's Analytics. That may not sound like much to a wealthy Democratic politician, but for an ordinary American family, it is a lot of money.

That \$175 a month may be the difference between whether or not parents can afford to get braces for their daughter. It may be the difference between going to visit family for Christmas or staying home and not seeing them. It may be the difference between having money for the extras, like family dinners at a restaurant or little league fees or ballet lessons or just being able to cover the bare necessities.

For families making less than the median U.S. income, \$100 or more a month can be the difference between making it to the next paycheck or running out of money. It can mean the dif-

ference between paying the heating bill or going cold during the winter.

Americans have seen increases in food prices and the price of bacon or beef or poultry, pork, peanut butter, fruits and vegetables, eggs, and the list goes on. The price of children's shoes is up. So is the price of furniture and gas and electricity and rent.

A recent AP article entitled “Winter heating bills set to jump as inflation hits home” noted “the U.S. Government said . . . it expects households to see their heating bills jump as much as 54 percent compared to last winter.”

Fifty-four percent.

Show me the working family that can easily absorb that increase. Inflation happens when you have too much money, too many dollars chasing too few of goods.

Democrats helped trigger our inflation situation earlier this year when they decided to pour a lot of unnecessary government money into the economy, despite being warned their partisan \$1.9 trillion spending bill could stoke inflation.

Now, with inflation clearly becoming a long-term problem, Democrats are preparing to double down on the government spending with a massive \$3.5 trillion tax-and-spending bill filled with priorities like \$200 million for a park in Speaker PELOSI's district—a park that features luxury housing and a golf course—and billions of dollars for a Civilian Climate Corps to provide government jobs for climate activists.

The massive government spending this bill—the biggest expansion of government, for sure, in decades, maybe in history—would authorize would pretty much guarantee that our country would be left with an even more persistent and widespread inflation problem.

Flooding the economy with government dollars isn't even the only way that the bill will contribute to inflation. The bill also contains big tax hikes on businesses, which are already raising prices thanks to the higher cost of shipping and materials and the challenges of hiring an adequate workforce. Raising taxes on those businesses could result in even higher consumer prices and/or reductions in the quality of services provided to consumers.

Government revenue for fiscal year 2021 saw a huge increase, driven in large part by tax receipts from corporations and well-off Americans. Those are the same companies and individuals the Democrats like to accuse of not paying their fair share.

But since Democrats' appetite for government spending is apparently insatiable, record-high government revenues don't look likely to stop them from passing their huge tax increases and driving up prices for consumers further.

Along with the flood of government spending Democrats passed in the spring, another major contributor to our inflation crisis has been supply chain bottlenecks. The White House

has largely failed to do anything to address the problem.

The President finally took one step forward when he announced the other day that the Port of Los Angeles will join the Port of Long Beach in operating 24/7.

Well, it is about time. Major ports around the globe already operate around the clock, but here in the United States, unions have largely stood in the way of round-the-clock operations. And even now, the Port of Los Angeles/Long Beach will not be fully 24/7 for a while. Only one of the container terminals is currently open around the clock, and then only for part of the week. The others are only slowly moving toward 24-hour operations with no deadline in sight.

Other than moving toward 24/7 operations in Los Angeles, however, the President is doing almost nothing to address the supply chain bottleneck. Infrastructure upgrades for ports, trucking, and rail are stuck in limbo while Democrats debate their \$3.5 trillion tax-and-spending spree.

And, while the President's Transportation Secretary has talked about loosening trucking regulations, his Department is actually pursuing an aggressive regulatory agenda that is likely to make transporting goods around this country more, not less, difficult.

And I don't even want to think about the transportation challenges that are likely to result from the government mandates and regulations that will emerge from the Democrats' \$3.5 trillion tax-and-spending spree.

It is unfortunate that Democrat elites cannot seem to grasp that inflation is a serious problem for working families and that the solution to our inflation problem is not to flood our economy with even more government money. If Democrats succeed in passing their reckless tax-and-spending spree, high inflation may be the order of the day for many, many days to come.

Let's hope that Democrats think better of their spending plans before American families end up paying the price.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 414, Catherine Elizabeth Lhamon, of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education.

Charles E. Schumer, Mazie Hirono, Tammy Duckworth, Martin Heinrich, Christopher A. Coons, Jack Reed, Benjamin L. Cardin, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Jeff Merkley, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tina